

No. [★]3467. 105



ADDRESS

OF THE

COMMITTEE OF SAINT MARY'S CHURCH,

OF PHILADELPHIA,

TO THEIR BRETHREN

OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC FAITH

THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

A Reform of Sundry Abuses

IN THE

ADMINISTRATION OF OUR CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

NEW-YORK:

J. KINGSLAND & CO. PRINTERS.

3821

From Pph. Vol. 28

21,754

UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO
LIBRARY

ADDRESS, &c.

FELLOW CITIZENS AND BROTHERS,

THE numerous and scandalous scenes which have frequently been repeated in this city, and which have occurred also in other places of these United States, owing to the arbitrary and unjustifiable conduct of certain foreigners, sent among us by the Junta or Commission, directing the Fide Propaganda of Rome, imperiously call on us to adopt some measures, by which a uniform system may be established for the future regulation of our churches; the propagation of our Holy faith, by the nomination and selection of proper Pastors from our own citizens; from whom alone ought to be chosen our bishops, without our being compelled to depend on persons sent to us from abroad, who have uniformly shown themselves hostile to our institutions, and completely ignorant of our country : in fine, for the adoption of such measures as will fix the respective rights of the clergy and the congregation.

It is not our wish, in calling your attention to this

object, to enter into many details respecting numerous arbitrary and unjustifiable proceedings of some bishops and clergymen, since the decease of our ever to be lamented father and friend, Archbishop Carroll. During his life time, his moderation and private virtues kept peace in the church, within his own diocese; and merited and received every respect and attention from the others; but as these states unfortunately have not been blessed with a second Carroll, who was a native of our country, and who, consequently, was well acquainted with our institutions, and respected them, as well as our individual rights, it becomes our duty, if we wish to preserve our religion unchanged, and free from the superstition and ignorance which has been attempted to be introduced among us, to adopt some general plan for the future management and direction of a uniform system throughout the United States; without being compelled, as heretofore, to receive, pay and obey men, who are a disgrace to our religion, to us, to themselves, and to those who send them.

In all countries, where no other religion but the catholic is acknowledged by the government, and even in those where no other is permitted, no such thing exists as the choice and appointment of the bishops and clergy, by the See of Rome,

The bishops are appointed by the respective governments, and by treaty or concordat made between those governments and His Holiness the Pope; the bull is granted for the bishop, when named, to exercise his functions, as a matter of course.

In all those countries, any person, who by his education may be entitled to be admitted into holy orders, may become a priest; but his becoming a priest, does not give him either authority or the means of subsistence; hence it is, that few or none enter into holy orders as secular priests, unless they are morally certain, from their own friends and connexions, or from their influence with the government or nobles, where they reside, to be able to procure a curacy or appointment in the church. The bishops, in the provinces, can ordain priests, but they cannot bestow on them livings. Their influence may be exerted to recommend them; but, most generally, the appointments of the parish clergy are made through the recommendation and influence of the respective congregations or parishioners: in many large and opulent districts in Spain and Italy, and it was formerly so in France, they are exclusively nominated and appointed by the lord or owner of the district, who appoints whom he pleases, to the

most valuable and lucrative dignities of the church, (with the exception solely of the bishops.) And when a priest is regularly appointed as a pastor, he holds his office for life ; and he cannot be deprived of it any more than one of the judges of the supreme court of the United States, who hold their offices on the tenor of their good behaviour, and can only be suspended when regularly impeached and tried. The bishops of a diocese may suspend a priest for *great irregularity* of conduct ; but he, *solely*, cannot sit in judgment on that priest ; and the trial must be conducted in conformity with the canons and ecclesiastical laws, and by his peers, or equals ; that is, by other clergymen appointed for that purpose by the archbishop of the province ; and an appeal is admitted even from this judgment to the sovereign of the country.

This is the rule in catholic countries ; and on this point there can be no doubt, since it is notorious to every man who has resided in those countries, and who has given himself the trouble to inquire into the fact ; besides, it is conformable to justice and common sense. Is it not, then, a shame and an insult offered to the respectable members of our holy church, in this enlightened age and country, where the government cannot, by the

constitution, interfere in any matter of religion, that the catholics are to be placed on a more degraded footing than they are in any other nation?

We sincerely believe, fellow citizens, that a remedy to all these evils is in our own hands. It requires us but to act with firmness and moderation, to completely eradicate these abuses, to restore peace and harmony among us; and make ourselves respected and respectable. Our holy father is too wise and too virtuous a man not to listen to our just complaints, and it only requires us to make them known direct to himself, to obtain redress.

The peculiar circumstances in which some of the most respectable members of our church are placed, in this city and others of the Union, imperiously call on us to adopt some measures. Some of the late imported Bishops, not satisfied with our passive obedience to their will and pleasure in matters of religion, though in some instances in direct opposition to the tenets and practice of that religion, have advanced much further, and claimed the sole control of our property; but the history of the world, as well as our own experience, teaches us, that the more we give up, the more will be required from us by them.

No Catholic church was ever built in this city,

or, as we believe, in any part of the United States, except with the money of the respective congregations, or by money raised by donations of individuals, or by lotteries granted by the state governments. The chapel of Saint Joseph, in this city, notwithstanding this, from the neglect of the trustees and congregation, is claimed and held by the Jesuits of Georgetown, District of Columbia, as representatives, as they assume to be, of the Priest, who was of their order, and whom our forefathers named to represent them, and to officiate at that church. The same pretended claim is now brought forward to Saint Augustine's church, which, by a late will, has been transferred to the friars of the Order of Saint Augustine, of whom the late pastor had been a member.

The illegality of such a will, not to dwell on the indelicacy and impropriety of the whole of such proceedings, loudly calls on the members of all the catholic churches in this city, to unite with those of the other States, who may be willing to join them, in order to adopt measures for putting a stop to such outrageous and scandalous proceedings.

Our country has never had any arrangement with the court of Rome—By our religion we acknowledge the Pope as our spiritual chief. The nature of our government and institutions do not autho-

rize our paying large sums of money to those who surround his Holiness, and who frequently make religion a pretext for deceiving him, which is contrary to every principle of our holy faith.—On this account, and from the divisions constantly fomented by the foreign clergymen sent among us, for they have always adopted the principle of creating divisions and parties in order to rule with greater despotism, we have been left entirely under the direction of a junta or commission formed at Rome, called the Fide Propaganda, established originally for the propagation of the catholic religion in those countries where the gospels were unknown, or where the government acknowledged a different religion.—We are, therefore, viewed in the same light as the nation of Cherokees or Choctaws, or the natives of the coast of Africa—our country is termed a missionary colony, and for want of a proper understanding with our Holy Father, we are subjected to receive foreigners of every class and description, to direct and command us, as if we were incapable of understanding our religion, or protecting our own property.

We have, therefore, taken the subject into serious consideration, and would propose to our fellow citizens of the Roman Catholic religion, to join and select a person of respectability and literary ac-

quirements, who should proceed to Rome, with full powers and authority from the Catholics of the United States, and enter into a regular and written agreement with our holy father, the Pope, on the following basis :

I. That, while we acknowledge the authority of the Head of the Church, as our spiritual father, and consent to conform to the rules and regulations, adopted by the Holy See, as respects our religion, we claim the exclusive right which always belonged to the church, of electing our own pastors and bishops ; and when a bishop shall be elected by the trustees and congregation of each respective state, he shall be ordained in this country, and receive the Bull, or approbation from Rome, as a matter of course.

II. That no priest, having been regularly chosen by the respective parishes, and inducted into the church, shall be suspended by the bishop, without a fair and impartial trial for any irregularity he may be charged with ; and in conformity to the canons and ecclesiastical laws, which laws shall be clearly defined, and published for the government of the clergy and congregation in these states ; all which shall be done with a view of explaining the duties and obligations of the clergy, to avoid the gross absurdity lately practised in this

city, of attempting to deny the authenticity of the canons quoted.

III. That, in case it should be the misfortune of the bishop's being compelled, at any period, to suspend a priest for irregularity of conduct, he shall be tried by three or more priests, of distinct states from that in which the suspension takes place ; and that he shall have an appeal from any judgment which may be given, to the archbishop of the United States, who shall be invested with authority to examine into, and decide on, the merits of the case, and from whose decision, there shall be a further appeal to the court of Rome.

IV. That, during the suspension and trial, the priest shall receive his pay or salary, as may have been agreed on with the parish to which he belongs ; and shall continue to receive the same, until a final judgment shall have been passed.

Should these measures meet the approbation of our fellow citizens, and be adopted, we have not the least doubt but that they will be approved by our Holy Father. We know from experience the serious embarrassments under which the junta of Fide Propaganda has laboured, in order to procure proper persons acquainted with our language, and capacitated to instruct us in our religion, to be sent out to this country.

They are compelled to depend on hearsay evi-

dence, or the recommendation of persons unknown to them, for the selection of such persons. Until lately, none were recommended to fill the situation of bishops, in this country, but by the Sulpicians or Jesuits, who consisted, almost exclusively, of French, and who, of course, being unacquainted with our language, were incapable of instructing us or our children in the principles of our holy religion, and under whose administration, in such circumstances, it could not possibly flourish. Of late years, we have had some prelates from among the Irish clergy, who, if they had been acquainted with the progress of catholicity or advancement of civilization in the United States, might have sent us such bishops as we stand in need of; but being (as it appears) unacquainted with both, it is not to be wondered, they should not, in general, make suitable selections; and the distance of Rome from Ireland precludes the possibility of the junta's being able to form a just opinion of their own on the merits or qualifications of the person or persons recommended.

In order to obviate the difficulties of procuring persons adequate to the task imposed on them, of preaching and instructing us in our religion, we would propose the establishment of a college for the express purpose of educating, annually, a certain number of persons to enter into Holy Orders.

When they are brought up among ourselves, and educated under our immediate inspection, we may look forward to the period when we shall have no difficulty in selecting proper characters to instruct and guide us in the way of truth; and by such a measure, we shall secure to our children proper preceptors, to instil into their minds the true faith; for which we may hope to receive comfort in this world, and eternal happiness in the next.

The propositions now submitted to your consideration, fellow citizens, contain no innovation, either in the spirit, form, or practice of our holy religion. The sole object we have in view is, to make ourselves respected; to eradicate abuses, which have in part been created by our own negligence, in not adopting, at an earlier period, some general system, whereby our rights should be secured; and to put an end to the scandalous divisions which have too long existed among us, and which have thrown the whole power into one side of the scales; and we do conceive, that it has been used, in too many instances, in a despotic and arbitrary manner, and been such as neither our education nor principles can sanction.

We ask for no more than are our rights, such as are practised in every other country, where the Holy Catholic Religion is exercised, and even in

those where no other is allowed. And we would ask, on what principles the clergy and bishops of our church assume, in this country, an authority which their equals, nay, their superiors, do not possess in Rome itself? all which is in direct contradiction to all the principles of our religion, the laws and canons, as laid down by the Holy Fathers and councils, held at different periods for the establishment of peace and concord among the faithful.

Let us but be faithful to ourselves, and we need be under no apprehensions as to the results. Under this firm and solemn impression, we beg leave to recommend the subject to your most serious attention; and we shall be happy to receive whatever communications you may be pleased to address to us, in order to carry into effect the object now proposed to you. We humbly pray God to enlighten our understandings, and enable us to accomplish what we so heartily desire—the re-establishment of peace and concord in our holy church. We subscribe ourselves your fellow citizens and brothers.

Philadelphia, June 18, 1821.

JOHN LEAMY. *Chairman.*

JOHN ASHLEY.

JOSEPH DUGAN.

MICHAEL DORAN.
 TIMOTHY DESMOND.
 RICHARD W. MEADE.
 LEWIS CLAPIER.
 THOMAS NEWMAN.
 JOHN T. SULLIVAN.
 JOHN SAVAGE.
 ANTHONY GROVES.
 CHARLES TAWS.
 EDWARD BARRY.

The names and places of residence of the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States.

*Right Rev. Dr. Marechal, *Baltimore.*

*Dr. Chevreux, *Boston.*

*Dr. Du Bourge, *St. Louis.*

*Dr. Flaget, *Bards Town, Kentucky.*

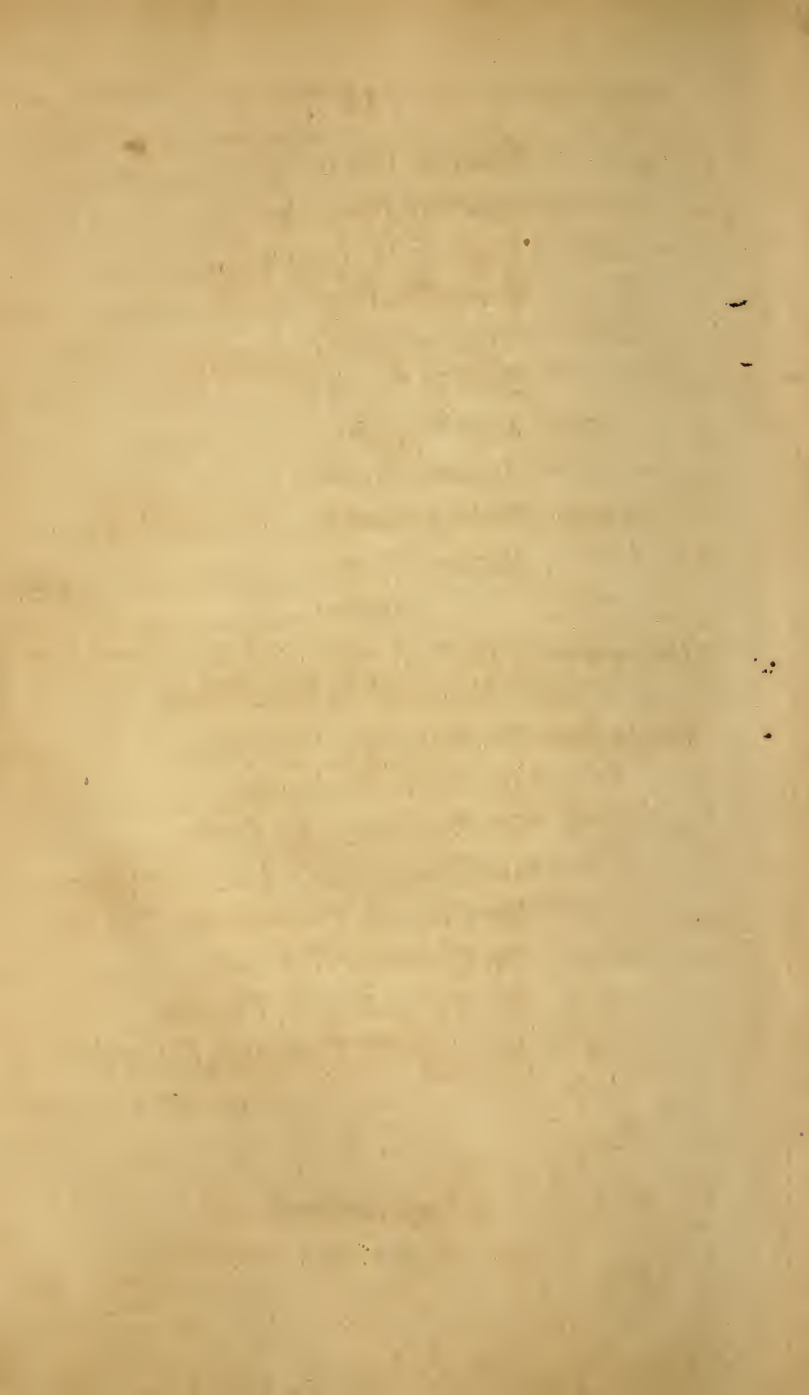
Dr. Conwell, *Philadelphia.*

Dr. Connelly, *New-York.*

Dr. Kelly, *Norfolk, Virginia.*

Dr. England, *Charleston, S. Carolina.*

* These are French.



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 07770 160 3

